

## **The revival of the Silk Road and its role on tourism and the development of Islamic Nations (With an emphasis on tourist attractions urbans and rurals)**

**Nasrollah FallahTabar\***

*Associate Prof. of Geography & Rural Planning, Yadegar-e-Imam Khomeini  
Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran*

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### **Abstract**

*Silk Road is ever known as the longest, most important, oldest and most mysterious gateways in the world. This way was started from the East of Xi'an or Chang'an in China with a distance of about 8000 was ended to the Mediterranean Sea in the West that it had a distance of about 10,000 km with its sub-sectors. In thousands of years the Silk Road has linked the around of the world and people together and the nations that located on the Silk Road routes have been influenced or affected from the developments. The road is the axis of the oldest cultural, scientific, religious and trade between East and West and it was one of the most important factors influencing the relationship between different nations, development and expansion of Islamic and Iranian culture. The powerful emergence of expansion of Islam and its expansion and development in the interconnected with global business, culture of different nations and different sciences could explain the role and importance of itself among the other religions as well. It was found in used analytical methodology that by vivifying of the Silk Road and the necessary interactions and principled planning such as taking advantage of the tourist attractions and potentials of urban and rural geographical, historical, religious, scientific, cultural and archeological it will be emerged the inextricable links between Islamic nations. Such a conclusion would be that the Silk Road have had a large part of our Islamic homeland in their towns, however, if this huge area is vivified it can establish an unbreakable nexus among Muslim people in attracting and developing Islamic nations and scenic and pilgrimage tourists by numerous tourist attractions in its path and the tourist attractions of towns and villages become visible more than before and placed in the path of development.*

**Keywords:** *revival, the Silk Road, development of Islamic nations, tourist attractions.*

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*\*Corresponding author: Na.Fallahtabar@gmail.com*

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### **Introduction**

It is clear that the communication is the foundation of every society and brings it the growth and development. The Silk Road was the most important linked bridge between peoples and nations of that time and has had this heavy historical and unforgettable burden on its shoulders for hundreds years. Also, every corner of the Silk Road has had a high value, for instance the Silk Road was started from the Xi'an or Chang'an and ended to the Kashgar after passing from the Gansu Wall which has a special beauty and landscape and also after passing from the Tarim plateau (Fallah-Tabar, 2009: 53).

On the other hand, the Tarim plateau has the length of 1500 km and the width of 750 km and the mountains with height of 6000 meters are placed in the north, south and the west and it is ended to the Gobi Desert from the east and the famous Taklamakan Desert is around it. In this desert, the sand dunes have buried many cities over the centuries.

Research shows that most commercial products have been shipped between China and Europe, which the largest and most famous of these products was the Silk that the Silk Road takes its name from that and (Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen) was called it the Silk Road in the 19th century (Franck and Brownstone, 1997, 12). On the other hand, high costs of passing from China to the Mediterranean are significant which it was possible to take about 200 days (Institute of Trade Studies and Research, 1996: 12).

In today's world, although the imposed borders separate the ancient large countries but the historical links between these nations, particularly Muslim nations, although weakened, but it is never gone that it was the result of the emergence of the Silk Road and its manifestation in different eras and from the beginning to the end of its greatness, this old road has had an especial importance. Thus it is worth that the countries, especially Muslim countries, underline their determination and try to vivify this famous road with empathy and

attunement and by using of the necessary and full available attractions in this way.

### **Research Methodology**

In a study of problems that have roots in different times, it is essential to back to the past in order to get a true and accurate result. So, in this study according to the prosperity and decline of the Silk Road in different ages and its rural and urban tourist attractions the historical method and the descriptive - analytical technique have been used.

### **Theory and hypothesis**

Research shows that the area where are the outer side of the Pamir Mountains and the areas of huge Tian Shan mountains, Passion, Russian Altai and Mongolian Altai always were the center of communication and exchange of culture and civilization between the people of the China's vast territory and the Aryans from the inception of the Aryan elements in the plates of Iran and India.

The Chinese who have had a wide land with long brows and fortified territory tried to keep it as a precious and rich and eternal existence and protect it against the plundering of the hands of sedition of time. The other human elements namely Scythians, Hyathl, Mardani, Hung, Turks, Tatars, Mongols, Turkmen, Uzbek etc. were extended in the central Asia plates form the past and somehow have been affected by the civil and social situation of China, Iran and India and was enjoyed of the stability and safety caused by governments measures of these countries effectively.

The least benefit that can be harvested from the stability and the taking over of wises in the vast area was the strength of the basics of rural and urban life and their intermediary to facilitate trade links between the two major divisions of East and West which was very valuable for them (Rezaei BaghBidi, 1997).

Although the history of life in mentioned plates have many hundred years old, but clearly it is related to the age of constituting of the Medes and Achaemenid Empire (Dandamayev, 1994), which the border of nations and countries communications is extended from the outer side of the Pamir and Tibet plateau to privacy of the Mediterranean and also the Atlantic Ocean and has continued in the shadow of stable order arose from the power of the politico-military of

forethoughtful governments of that dynasty and also its Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanid successors.

The Silk that was produced since ancient times in China was one of the major industrial and commercial secrets. On the other hand, the Mediterranean region the Silk was very precious and was like gold. The Chinese were successful to create a great way and full of caravansary in the northern and southern shores of the Desert (Taklamakan) that has extended beyond the Pamirs and joint to the center, West and South of Asia from there and sent and sell the Silk to there. But soon afterwards the merchants of Sughd and Kushan and Parthian took the business in their hands. These merchants who spoke different Iranian dialects were sent the large caravans of camels which their rainfall were crystal, perfume and jewelry (Chekangi, 1997: 12).

It is noteworthy that the geographical context of the Silk Road has contained the most beautiful geographical landscapes and the most dangerous climatic conditions and the most fearsome ridges and thalwegs. Beautiful environments and the violence of its long path and also encounters that has occurred along the way by the enemies, pirates and ransom earners are always remembered in mined and has been quoted chest by chest. This matter is the reason of grandeur of the Silk Road (Fallah-Tabar, 2009, 53).

However, it has been hypothesized that the Silk Road revival and greater excellence and attention to rural and urban tourism attractions accelerate the development of Islamic nations and interconnect them together.

#### **The relation between the Silk Road and the great King's Road**

One of the main roads is the famous King's Road that was made at Achaemenid Empire and became famous to the great King's Road. This road formed the western part of the Great Silk Road later. The researchers have understood the great King's Road as the motivation of the consolidation of the economic and political sovereignty of Achaemenid Empire.

In historical sources there have been discussed about Cyrus battles in the East. But his purpose was different of campaigning to the west and east. The Cyrus's goal of campaigning to the west was to capture the rich lands such as Babylon, Assyria, Lydia (Lydia- Asia Minor) and to achieve to the Greek ports of the Mediterranean Sea. But his battles in

the east were in order to keep the Iran safe against the invasion of nomadic tribes that were early stage of development. In fact, Iran did not withhold of any efforts to protect their borders among the other countries and always was and is honor and pride.

Before the Achaemenid Empire, there was some ways in Iran. One of them was a way that joined the Ecbatana (Hamadan) to the Rudan (Mesopotamia) and passed from the Behistun (Inscription). The main King's road of Achaemenid era passed from the Shushan (Susa), Erbil, northern Arvand River, the Tigris, West of Great Armenia, Cappadocia, and Sardis and has continued to Afsos area. Secondary roads such as: Persepolis to Susa road connected the Babylon from the Karkhemish to the Egypt. The Babylon- Behistun road to Ecbatana and other roads linked with this main road. Some researchers have known Harran on the main road. However, the Babylon was full of importance, but was not on the main road. Macedonian Alexander's return from Susa to Babylon shows that still at that time the mentioned city was not located on the main road because despite the small distance between Susa and Babylon, Alexander had to travel a long way to go to Babylon. He first came from Susa to Ecbatana - Behistun - Babylon in order to arrive to the city (Reza, 1997: 202).

Commercial relations between Iran and India have established another road in the east of Iran from the Qobadian Balkh to Rawalpindi in the Indian subcontinent and treasures discovered in Qobadian is an evidence of this point. Researchers said that the mentioned way joined the Bukhara to the Rawalpindi and passed from the G. gardens, Vahsh and the upper way of Amu Darya. This great road caused to establish the other small roads. It is clear that the number of secondary roads of Iran was numerous, for example it can be cited the paving road of Susa - Persepolis that there is an instance in the Behbahan.

In this procedure, the old ways joined together and the Great Silk Road links emerged gradually that stretched to the coast of Mediterranean. Charax Isidore, who lived in the first century AD, has mentioned to the roads that connected two ends of the Silk Road together and also Stages and caravansaries which Parthians created along the road. The Parthian branch of the Silk Road extended from the Antioch to the coast of the Euphrates and from there to Seleucia (near the Ctesiphon) and finally joined to the Hegmataneh and arrived

from this city to Ray and to Nisa (Nysayh) and Marv. It seems that the old ways to be joined to the Great Silk Road (Reza, 1997: 202-203).

### **The efforts of Iran's enemies to remove it from the pass of the Silk Road**

Iran had a high grade to send silk and its export. Later Sogdians, the Emperor Turks and Arabs have also turned to this work. The Government of Ethiopia is also not so deprived. The Byzantine Empire tried to use it the other way in order to avoid interference of Iran in export of silk. This way passed from the north of the Caspian Sea and the caravans had to bypass the Caspian Sea in order to avoid entering the country and from the north while crossing the mountains of the Caucasus took themselves to the Constantinople. Passing this way was dangerous and difficult. The caravans had to pass from the exhausting heat, warm and dry areas that it was hard and impossible. So they preferred to go to the areas along the river. This ways only passed through the Iranian territory. As a result, the Byzantine Empire was belonged to Iran in the silk trade and Roman merchants had no choice but to buy silk from Iranian merchants.

In the year 297 AD, an agreements was signed the between the Byzantine Empire and Narseh (Nursi) the Sassanid king which accordingly the Nusaybin city in the Arvand River (Tigris) defined as a place to exchange and buy and sell goods and silk among Iranian and Roman merchants. In the years 408-409 AD, except of Nusaybin, the Callinicos (Raqqa) in the left shore of the Tigris River and also Artashat city in the coast of Aras were added.

The Artashat city where was the capital of the Parthian (Arshkyan) in Armenia was very thriving until the attack of the Shapur II, the Sassanid king and Ecbatana (Hamadan) was the center of the intersection of roads. These roads were connected to Hegmataneh from the north and from the North East including Marv and Samarkand. The received goods sent to the Artashat (Devin) but the major road was that led to Ctesiphon and Nusaybin from there. In 562 AD, the fifty-year peace treaty was signed between the two governments according to which Iranian and Romans businessmen were right to trade only in areas with customs facilities. All the merchants and owners of the products had to pay an amount as a right

of entry and exit of goods. It is important from the perspective of international law.

Turks achieved great economic and political power after seizing Sogdia, because the biggest way in the east that the caravans can pass through and extended to the Iranian border was in their hands. This way was extended from the Kashgar and Shapur-gan area to the south of central Asia and led to the Iranian border. From the Iranian border to Nisibis was eighty days (Reza, 1997: 207).

After this incident, the Turks tried to attack to the Iran, but the positions and ramparts that Iranian were created in the fifth century AD against Hbtalyan was impenetrable from the Turks view. Hence, the attack stopped (Christensen, Arthur, 1972: 397). In 571 AD, Khosrow Anushiravan captured the writ of Bast, Arachosia, Zabulistan, Tokārestān and Kabulistan but Sogdia still remained in the hands of the Turks.

The Byzantine emperor tried to be linked with India by the sea in order to connect the Roman trade to the India ports through the Ethiopian sailors but because of the authority of Iranian sailors in the ports of India the Ethiopians did not succeed in competition with Iranian merchants and seafarers. The government of the Byzantine Empire tried to create another great way in the Arabian Peninsula and reach to the Yemen and Indian Ocean through it. This road was called strata and was an important road that passed from the south of Palmyra (Tadmor) and linked a series of major areas together. But the policy of the Iranian government caused to clashes between Arab tribes, especially ghassanids and Lakhmids and the policy of Byzantine Empire also failed in this field (Pigulevskaia, 1993: 215).

At the time of the Sassanid the governmental organizations had a special attention to the travel and security of caravan routes and stations, and caravanserais and other business and sent a number of their agents to the border areas and ports in order to monitor the trade and economic activities. In this era, the details of every road from the perspective of geographical and also welfare facilities for passengers and economical aspects and even statistical information related to the number of resident and the amount and type of goods and the amount of tax were recorded in special books (Kargar, 2007: 172).

Historians wrote the production of Silk fabrics in Iran belongs to the covenant of Shapur II (379-309 AD) of Sassanid king. It seems that before that time, the Iranian weavers were engaged to produce the Silk fabrics. One of these fabrics has been involved the image of Mithras.



Map No. (1): The Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean Sea  
Source: google.com



Figure (1): The ardent deserts and caravans and diligent traders of the Silk Road  
Source: google.com

Along the Silk Road in addition to goods, Science, Knowledge of different nations, cultures and beliefs of them were sent and also were intercepted. This knowledge has had the greatest effect on the history and has left the lasting legacies to us today (Strathern, 1997: 12-13).

#### **Some of the Iranian tourism attractions in the Silk Road field**

- Sistan and Baluchestan Province: Hamoun lake and its Toutans (traditional boats) in Zabul and recreational area Chahnimeh in Zabul, Mkrzn tree (*Ficus religiosa*) in the Nickshahr and Miss caves, Birk, Kzvr, Multan mountains and Pouzebagh Hot spring, Bozman.
- Khorasan Razavi Province: Akhmlh waterfall located in Chenaran, tourism areas like Monjaq Tappeh and Yusuf Khan in Quchan, Ferar



garden in Kashmar, tourist areas in outskirts of Mashhad and Nation garden and Neshat garden in Mashhad and the tourism village Khan Mohammad located in Neyshabur.

- North Khorasan Province: Baba Aman park located in Bojnord.

- South Khorasan Province:

- 1) Rahim Abad Garden and Mansion, Shaukat Abad Gardens and Mansion in Birjand.

- 2) Caves: Faghan Cave, Atashgah, Bidak, Akhlmr, Bidokht, Bazangan, Putin Doze, Baghcheh, Bymarab, Parde Rustam, Khesht, Rosy, Dozdak, Kardeh, Konajke, Mzngan, Handel Abad, Mozduran, Khonik Pars, Behesht, Chenesht.

- 3) The hot springs: Shahan Garmab, Garmab, Besh Ghardash.

- Golestan Province: Lowe waterfall Maran castle in Minoo Dasht, rodeo horses racing event in Gonbad-e Qabus, Baran Kuh waterfall, Ziarat waterfall, Rango waterfall and fountain, Golestan National Park, Alang Valley (Tourism area), The Tourism area of Nahar Khoran Gorgan, Forest Park Imam Reza (aS) in Kordkoy, Kaboodval waterfall, Zarin Goli forest Park in Ali Abad, flower garden hall in Ramian, Ramian waterfall, nature and landscape of Mian Kaleh in the Turkmenbashi port.

- Mazendaran Province: Dasht-e Naz National Park in Sari, Forest Park of Sisangan, the Botanical Garden of Noshahr, Mirza Koochak Khan forest park in Amol, Chaldare forest park in Tonekabon, Namakabroud Gondola lift in Chaloos and Espahbod Caves, Khorshid, Pirzan Khani, Dyvsfyd Kyja Kachal, Gole Zard, Hutu, Shirabad, Siahpoor, Hyldv, Khorramabad, Eshkevarat and Ab Ask hot springs, Sadat Mahaleh, Sakhtsar, Larijan, Katalem.

- Gilan Province: Beautiful landscape of Masooleh in Fooman, Lonak waterfall, landscape and natural areas of Deilaman located in Siahkal, landscape of Manjil and Sefid Rood in Roodbar, Sjyrann waterfall in the Roodsar, old garden Mohtasham (Quds Park) located in Rasht, 90-year-old coastal park in Anzali port, Lavandevil waterfall, natural landscape of Heyran and Abbas Abad garden in Astara.

- East Azerbaijan Province: Asiabe Kharabe waterfall and Kabootar caves in Jolfa, Aq Bulaq, Dvglyjan, Eskandar, Besley and Hampvyl and Khalkhal hot spring, Sareyn, Pooshaki, Qnyrjh, Ilando, Moobel, Bostanabad, Sarab, Alhaq.

- West Azerbaijan Province: Urmia vineyards, Band and Nazloo park and walkway in Urmia, ancient hills in the center of Bukan, landscapes and mountains in Piranshar, Shalmash waterfalls and big Boring caves located in Sardasht, small Boring, Takht-e Soleiman, Sohoolan and Bash Kandi hot spring, Shah Abad, Haftabeh, prison of Solomon, Qaranjeh, Khan, Isi Su.
- Semnan Province: Shahmirzad tourism area and Darband caves, Noravan, Shirband, Daghe Kashkouli (Afghans prison) and Semnan hot spring.
- Kerman Province: Shazdeh Mahan garden in Mahan of Kerman, cultural and sports services located in Rafsanjan, Dosari waterfall and Ayub caves in Jiroft, Trang, Shoaib and The Khatun hot spring, Abaregh, Bojan, Rezaabad, Pachenar, Bisheh, Tang Ashueid, Esfandage, Asgar Castle.
- Yazd Province: Gulshan in Tabas, Khab garden and Dolatabad garden and also Eslamiyeh caves in Yazd (Fararshah), Eshkoft Yazdan, Nabati.
- Esfahan Province: Fin Garden and Niasar waterfall in Kashan, Rosewater sampling in Ghamsar, Moorchehort plain in Shahin Shahr, birds garden and Chah Arazeh caves in Esfahan, Palang, Ghahreman, Kalahrod, Helabad, Niasar and Dartun hot spring, Mahalat.
- Qom province: Gonbade Sabz garden in Qom and Kohak cave.
- Qazvin province: Kholeh Kooch hill and Avan Lake and Angool caves in Takestan, Jajet Khane, Shams Kalayeh, Vali and Buin Zahra hot spring.
- Zanzan province: Sharshar waterfall in Zanzan, Ghaterchi Darband (one of the early human settlement centers) in Mahneshan and Palangan caves, Tavdan, Chelleh Khane, Chehar Ashgoft, Shapur, Ghand Ab king, Zahhak, Band castle, Pirzan, Siyah Chal, dungeons, Kan Gohar, Gorkan, Kalatak, Zacharia, Geber, Pelleh, Safaq, Khojast, Allama Jalaluddin Davani, Katalekhhor, Kharmanesar, Bezj, Jareh Qāyeh Si, Jake Gol, Alam Kandi, Qurrlu and Qushkar & Vatnaq hot spring.
- Markazi province: Ave hill in Saveh, Didar one of the floriculture center and Asili caves in Komeyjan, Azadkhan, Baba Jaber, Puryng, Khaneye Sheytan, Nakhjir hole, Khanabad, Zagheh, Bozorg, Rasund

holes, Sefid Khani, Suleh Khunda, Surakh Tangeh, Keikhosro, Shoghal Darreh, Taqarcheh, Lanjrud, Givoh Kesh, Milan Lashun, Vashnouh, Yek Chaei, Asnajdan, Zolfabad, Seyf, Aqrab, Gavkhor, Ali Khorande, Gorgan and Ahu, Balut, Rezaabad and Yele Gonbad hot spring, Khargan , Grave.

• Hamedan province: Sarkan seven old girded Plane tree in Tuysarkan, Goorab located hill in Malayer, Tuliplands of Ghaleabad village in Nahavand, Ganjnameh waterfall, tourism and recreational building of Abbasabad and Mosali hill and Hegmataneh hill and also Agh Ghaya caves in Hamedan, Barge Lije, Baglyjeh, Shahir, Azad, Takht, Faraj valley, Sardkuh, Ali Sard, Juq castle, Gamasiab, Hiraj, Khurzaneh, Avarzaman, Gorz, Shahrestaneh, Ghahreman, Buzineh, Jard, Giyan, Farsian, Malusan, Banafsheh, Pyrsalman, Sarab, Sue Shi, Hameh Kasi (Vaspor, 2002).

Hormozgan province: Harra forests located in Bandar Abbas, Kish Aquarium anchor in the Langar port, Maro hill in Rudan or Dehbarez and caves Qarbastu caves, Sadermand, early humans, Syahkesh and Getu hot spring (Tourism Organization, 1999).

Obviously, all attractions are outside of the scope of this issue and should be presented in a special subject and the other rural and urban tourist attractions of this road in order to development in future in the tourists passed specially Muslim nations will appear automatically when the road will be vivify.

**Table 1: Affecting factors in the development of tourism**

Urbanization	Affecting factors	Row
Development of communication and ease of access	//	1
The development of knowledge and public culture	//	2
Reforming the labor laws and working conditions	//	3
Increasing the income	//	4
Religious attractions and religious sites	//	5
Advertisements	//	6
Facilities	//	7
Historical heritage	//	8
Natural Attractions	//	9
Leisure time	//	10
Culture and customs	//	11
Sport Attractions	//	12
Legal regulations	//	13

Source: Author

In fact, Islamic countries located on the Silk Road create four main cultural ways that the richest and most extensive of human heritage is in there and this live and historical heritage has created the main tourism attractions in the region (Samadian, 2011: 10). In addition, according to the table (1), there are many towns and villages along the Silk Road with abundant tourist attractions that all of them can be effective in the field of revitalization of the Silk Road and finally its development in linking the Islamic countries.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

It is obvious that the Islamic homeland takes advantage of several features that other countries do not have such a privilege. Iran's special geographic location, climate variability, locating on the Silk Road and healthy and lively towns and villages provide a safe place for passengers and on the other hand, variety of attractions represents the capabilities of the Islamic homeland in various sectors, especially tourism.

Hypothesis of this study is proved according to this fact that the Silk Road situation in the Islamic homeland from the beginning has shown the creating safety, effort, skill, dignity and authority of Iranians in different periods, for economic, commercial and transplantation purposes and also connecting the Nations and in addition the scientific, cultural, artistic and religious exchanges were done which are very effective in prosperity of the country and vivifying of it will lead to inextricably link and interconnect of Muslim nations. Obviously, in this regard the towns and villages stay on the development pass in terms of tourist attractions and come out of isolation.

Iran is known as an adverse tourist destination from different aspects including: Long distances to tourist centers of rich world, advertising of enemies in order to show a distorted, unfair and devoid of logic picture about national sovereignty and internal security and the lack of comfort desired to spend time in travel and introducing our country as a land of severe people, religious, violent and restless and despite the great tourist attractions did not succeed in attracting tourists who are interested to the traditions and culture, ancient heritage, virginal nature etc. (Kargar, 1998: 131).

On the other hand, it should be prioritized the protection of tourist attractions in order to maintain, sustain and promote of tourism and push it toward sustainable development and it is essential the organizing it as a national property. So, this important matter should always be considered while maintaining abundant tourist attractions in cities and villages and should be try to take advantage of it by vivifying of this old road and by considering the requirements of this age particularly closely empathy and attunement with Muslim countries and finally we should provide the backgrounds in various fields especially in the field of urban and rural development and sustainable development.

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